

MIDDLEFIELD PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
405 Main Street
Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Minutes of the January 27, 2021 Regular Meeting

Jan Wojas, called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

Attendance:

Members		Alternates	
A	Brown, Jay	X	Warner, Bill
X	Ekblade, Eric		
X	Hinsch, Ken		
X	Pizzo, Paul	Others	
X	Wojas, Jan	X	Newton, Robin
		A	Curtis, Brian
		X	Russ, Jerry
		A	Bailey, Ed, <i>ex officio member</i>

A=Absent

X=Present

Mary Johnson was present from the Public.

Public Comment

Mary Johnson asked about affordable housing and a grant. Ms. Johnson inquired if anything on the agenda was related to affordable housing and what exactly is affordable housing?

Chairman Wojas stated nothing on the agenda is related to affordable housing.

Ms. Johnson asked what the working definition is of affordable housing for the town?

Chairman Wojas stated he would refer her to the State for that information.

Town Planner Newton added that the definition is spelled out in Connecticut General Statutes 8-30g and that the affordable figure is a formula which is spelled out in the statute.

Ms. Johnson asked for more information regarding the grant that the Town received and how it was related. Are there active plans for affordable housing.

Town Planner Newton stated the grant has been previously discussed but she was happy to provide the information. Ms. Newton explained that the grant was awarded for assistance with preparing an Affordable Housing Plan which is required under 8-30j of the Connecticut General Statutes. The state put out monies for the hiring of consultant to assist with the development of these plans. The Town is currently working on this plan.

Commissioner Pizzo stated that the bid went out already? Ms. Newton stated yes it went out in the Fall and a firm was selected and has started work on the plan.

Commissioner Pizzo asked if there will be workshops scheduled at some point so that people in Town can come and express opinions on the plan?

Ms. Newton stated that there will be an opportunity for the public to comment.

Ms. Johnson asked if the Plan of Conservation and Development still stated that Middlefield is a septic based Town and not to expand our sewer systems any further.

Ms. Newton explained that the Plan of Conservation and Development has not changed and is not going to change. Ms. Newton stated that Ms. Johnson could reach out to her offline and she would be more than happy to answer any questions she may have.

Public Hearing

1. Continuation of the Public Hearing For the Reorganization of the Middlefield Planning and Zoning Regulations.

Chairman Wojas stated for the record that the information has been available for the public. The link has been on the Towns website.

Ms. Newton explained that this request was simply a reorganization of the Zoning Regulations to be more user-friendly. It includes a searchable and linked Table of Contents and provided headings for sections of the regulations. There are no changes in content.

Commissioner Pizzo indicated that a letter was received by Torrance Downes at RiverCog acknowledging that received the review and they had no issues with the reorganization as there were no changes.

Chairman Wojas added, and the Commission has reviewed this for a number of months. This is a reformatted and not changes.

Commissioner Pizzo added that the regulations is now more like a search engine to make it easier for people who are looking for information. Ms. Newton stated that was current the goal was to make this much more user friendly.

Chairman Wojas asked for any comments. There were none.

Ms. Newton indicated the commission should close the public hearing, so it is clear what is being discussed and to keep the hearings separated for each item.

Chairman Wojas asked for a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Ekblade made a

motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Pizzo seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

2. **2. For the adoption of a draft regulation for Flood Regulations.**

3.

Chairman Wojas opened the hearing for the adoption of the DEEP Model Flood regulations.

Town Planner Newton gave some background on this proposed change. Ms. Newton indicated this would be an entire section change. Ms. Newton stated the current regulations are old and not up to current standards. The proposal is to remove the current regulations and replace with the DEEP Model regulations. There are no verbiage changes in the model regulation with the exception of adding the word "Middlefield". These are an exact replica. This does not affect a large number of properties which are developable in Middlefield. This will however give us points if in the future the Town wants to apply to be a CRS community, which the First Selectman does have the hopes in doing because it would provide a small discount on flood insurance.

Ms. Johnson asked if Attorney Mark Branse took a look at the regulations and approved them. Ms. Johnson did indicate that she did know that we try to mimic the State guidelines, but she was wondering where and when it was decided we have to be in lockstep with the State of Connecticut?

Chairman Wojas asked why she would oppose that?

Ms. Johnson stated Middlefield has its own unique features and in the past Middlefield has not been in lockstep with the State.

Town Planner Newton wanted to answer Ms. Johnson's questions. Ms. Newton indicated that the attorney only reviewed the regulations for the non-conformities and doesn't want to discuss specifics until we open the hearing for that section. Ms. Newton indicated that that particular section has the most text changes and statutory changes, so he was involved in the review. The reorganization has no text changes, so he was not involved in that. This Flood section there was nothing to review as this is a State Model regulation and there are no changes to the model. Finally, the Interior Lot regulation was minimal in nature and did not need to be reviewed.

Ms. Newton also added that the flood regulations need to be up to date for the purposes of participating in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Ms. Johnson stated she understands that. She indicated she remembered when they received new maps.

Commission Pizzo asked if Attorney Branse was aware of the regulation updates. Ms. Newton indicated he was aware of them and asked to review the non-conforming regulation changes which he did.

Chairman Wojas asked for a motion to close the public hearing for the adoption of the DEEP Model Floodplain Regulations. Commissioner Pizzo made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Ekblade seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

3. For the adoption of a draft regulation for Non-Conforming Uses and Structures.

Chairman Wojas opened the public hearing. Ms. Newton shared her screen and read through the

changes to the regulations for the public who was not on a computer. Ms. Newton stated these changes were made by Attorney Branse and went through all the changes.

After reviewing the changes, Ms. Newton asked if anyone had any questions. Commissioner Pizzo made a minor grammatical change. Ms. Johnson stated she was good and glad that Attorney Branse reviewed and approved.

Chairman Wojas asked for a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Pizzo moved to close the public hearing. Commissioner Ekblade seconded the motion. Motion was carried unanimously.

4. For the adoption of a draft regulations for Interior Lots.

Chairman Wojas opened the public hearing.

Town Planner Newton indicated there were minimal changes made to this section and went through the changes with the Commission and the public. These changes came along based on some questions raised during the summer. Language concerning permit application type was added. The next change concerned the grade percentage for driveways both residential and industrial. It was noted that these changes were recommended by our Town Engineer. The final change was language which concerned the determination of how many interior lots are allowed.

Ms. Johnson asked if Attorney Branse reviewed these changes as well. Ms. Newton indicated that he did review these changes as they did not require the Attorney. It was an engineering question as such was reviewed by the Town Engineer.

Chairman Wojas asked for a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Ekblade made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Hinsch seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

1. Reorganization of the Zoning Regulations

Chairman Wojas asked if there was any discussion from the Commission members regarding the reorganization of the Zoning Regulations. There were none.

Commissioner Pizzo made a motion to approve the reorganization of the zoning regulations as submitted by the Town planner. Commissioner Ekblade seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Adoption of DEEP Model Flood Regulations

Chairman Wojas asked if there was any discussion from the Commission on the adoption of the model DEEP flood regulations. There was none.

Commissioner Pizzo made a motion to approve the DEEP model flood regulations for the Town of Middlefield. Commissioner Ekblade seconded the motion. Motion was carried unanimously.

3. Amendments to Non-Conforming Section of Regulations

Chairman Wojas asked if there was any discussion from the Commission on the adoption of the

Non-Conforming section of the regulations. There was no discussion.

Commissioner Pizzo made a motion to approve the changes to the non-conforming section of the regulations as reviewed by the Town Attorney. Commissioner Hinsch seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Amendments to Interior Lots

Chairman Wojas asked if there was any discussion from the Commission on the adoption of the Interior Lot regulations. There was no discussion.

Commissioner Hinsch made a motion to approve the changes to the interior lot regulation. Commissioner Pizzo seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

New Business

NONE

Report of the ZEO

Mr. Russ there was great progress with the CT Storage Facility on Route 66.

No changes on property violations. Indicated that the Attorney, town planner and him would be working on the Jimmy D. violation.

Mr. Russ gave an update on a new lot being built on.

Chairman Wojas asked for an update on the Monarca property. Ms. Russ have a quick update.

Chairman Wojas asked about the Zenelis property. Mr. Russ stated they have been actively working on cleaning up the site.

Commissioner Ekblade asked about any information that could be shared regarding the Pogmore Property. Mr. Russ stated he had no information other than it was being sold and thought Robin and Ed were working on it. Town Planner Newton stated that the Town has been in discussion with the executors of the estate for possible purchase of the property for Open Space. Ms. Newton reminded the Commission about the OSWA grant application that was submitted over the summer and indicated that there was no updated information. She did indicate that not having an active contract with the property owner could be a hold up on the grant application. Other than that, there was no further information.

Report of the Town Planner

There is a training opportunity that was emailed to the Commission members for March 6th. This is the Wesleyan training about will be held virtually this year. Ms. Newton stated it is a great training research and comes with a book. These sessions are written by the top land use attorneys in the State. She would like anyone who would like to go to let her know as soon as possible so she can process the request. She highly recommends the training.

Ms. Newton reported that a new permitting software will be going live hopefully on February 1st. This will include all administrative permits including building, zoning, electrical, etc. This will also allow Jerry to perform inspections and submit results on a tablet in the field. This will help streamline the process.

Affordable housing survey was closed. We had not quite 200 responses. This information will be put together for review. She will review with the consultants. Next steps are really demographics. She anticipates hoping to have in person public outreach.

Jerry Russ and I started in September started to put together an enforcement program for consistency.

Finally, Ms. Newton asked what the Commission would like to work on next. She went over a list that she had for feedback. The list included projections, definitions, commercial and industrial use tables and design standards. Ms. Newton was looking for feedback. Commission will email suggestions.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Wojas congratulated Paul Pizzo on being involved with the regional planning agency on behalf on Middlefield.

Bill Warner joined the meeting.

Chairman Wojas asked about the Epic Farms violation. Mr. Russ gave a brief overview of the violation.

Approval of Minutes - December 21, 2020

Commissioner Hinsch stated he had some changes on the way some of the public comment read in the minutes. Ms. Newton indicated the public comment was verbatim. Commissioner Hinsch felt it was hard to understand and wondered if we could change the wording. Ms. Newton said she would look at the changes and provided they didn't change the context of what was said we could make changes.

Commissioner Hinsch will send his recommended changes for review. The approval of minutes was tabled to the next meeting.

Scheduling of Hearings

NONE

Adjournment

Paul Pizzo made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Eric Ekblade seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Newton

Robin Newton, AICP, CZEO
Town Planner